

Town Meeting Coordinating Committee

Meeting of Tuesday, November 24, 2009

Bangs Community Center, room 101

Attendance: Peggy Roberts, Harry Brooks, Dorwenda Bynum-Lewis, Nonny Burack, Carol Gray, Mary Streeter (arrived 4:44), Rob Crowner

1. Call to order: Peggy calls the meeting to order at 4:41pm.

2. Minutes of previous meeting: Nonny moves and Carol seconds approval of the minutes of the October 23, 2009, meeting and the motion succeeds unanimously.

3. Ad hoc committee on budget motions: Peggy reads a copy of the message she sent to Kay Moran after receiving the draft minutes from the ad hoc committee meeting prepared by the latter.

TMCC representatives Mary and Nonny disagree with the account of the meeting reflected in the draft minutes, specifically its omission of a recommendation to experiment with the order of municipal budget motions. There was no vote but they felt that the consensus of the meeting called for something to be attempted, followed by a survey of Town Meeting conducted by TMCC. Mary reports that this corresponds with the summary conveyed to the Select Board by its representatives on Monday, November 23, 2009. Mary states that if (when) the motions are reordered, the Finance Committee budget book should match that order, though she notes that preparation of the budget book is often a last-minute operation. Carol cautions that whatever results from the budget motion initiative should not increase confusion for Town Meeting nor make creating the budget book more difficult.

Peggy reads an excerpt from a Secretary of the Commonwealth publication released in 2000 entitled "Citizens' Guide to Town Meeting", which describes several different ways that a budget could be handled by Town Meeting. Carol suggests that TMCC could consider bringing an article to Town Meeting if it is not satisfied with the action resulting from the meeting of the ad hoc committee. Peggy states that it is the role of TMCC to help educate Town Meeting members. Nonny agrees, adding that demystifying the work and expertise of the Finance Committee should be part of the education.

Nonny states that she plans to attend the next meeting of the Finance Committee on December 17, 2009, when it will updated on the work of the ad hoc committee.

4. Review of Fall events: Peggy states that the TMCC stickers on Town Meeting packets seemed to be well received and shouldn't be an issue going forward. It is agreed that getting TMCC materials into the first packet is preferable, since it is usually less busy than the second. Dorwenda states that more maps should be included in the mailings in order to give people time to absorb them. Mary proposes attempting to persuade the Planning Board to conduct its required public hearings earlier so that its reports can be distributed earlier, but Carol suggests just asking that its handouts, memos, and maps be made available in time for the Warrant Review. The committee authorizes the chair to draft and transmit a letter to the Planning Board conveying this request.

The committee reviews summaries of the evaluation forms compiled by Mary. Regarding attendance at precinct meetings, it is noted by several members of the committee that phone call reminders and the promise of refreshments would help turnout. Additionally, it is recommended that evaluations be available or handed out as people enter an event, and then collected as they leave.

The committee agrees that the display of old Town Meeting photos created by Peggy and Mary should be saved and brought to the next Warrant Review at least.

The committee agrees that both the bus and ACTV should be asked to arrive ahead of the scheduled departure time for the bus tour so that the event can start on time (and so that people don't have to wait in inclement weather).

5. ACTV: At the committee's request, Harry agrees to make a proposal to ACTV that "generic" TMCC events from previous years, including zoning and budget informational forums, be rebroadcast periodically throughout the year. Carol will write a disclaimer to explain possible dated or obsolete material and to indicate that the programs are intended to provide background rather than to persuade.

The committee authorizes the chair to draft and transmit a letter to ACTV expressing the committee's gratitude for ACTV's efforts. Harry advises sending it to the director, with copies to the board.

At the committee's request, Harry agrees to secure for the Jones Library one copy each on DVD of the bus tour and the warrant review and at least one copy of the informational forum, the assumption being that the former will be less popular now that the Town Meeting for which they were produced is over. Harry also agrees to find out how often video on demand is accessed from the ACTV website.

6. Notification of expiring terms: Peggy states that the next annual town election is scheduled for March 23, 2010 – earlier than usual, meaning that the deadline for nominations to Town Meeting is also earlier than usual, making the contacting of members whose terms expire a priority for the committee.

Nonny agrees to produce and mail postcards to members whose terms expire, based on the list created by Mary. Dorwenda will print mailing labels. Harry will determine how much the committee's account was billed for the bus tour before Nonny purchases stamps. Mary states that the committee should follow up later with calls or emails if necessary.

Peggy agrees to contact the League of Women Voters with the committee's request that TMCC membership be noted on the "They Represent You" publication.

7. Electronic voting: Mary states that messages have been received recently from Kris Pacunas and Aaron Hayden about possible leads for electronic voting systems.

8. Winter projects: No action.

9. Next meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 7, 2010 at 4:30pm. Nonny will reserve a meeting space.

10. Adjournment: The meeting is adjourned at 6:04pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Crowner

Approved: February 1, 2010

Documents distributed at the meeting:

1. agenda
2. draft minutes of October 23, 2009
3. draft minutes of November 11, 2009, ad hoc committee on budget motions
4. TMCC Fall events evaluation forms summary